

Securing the Seas

The National Strategy for Maritime Security.

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In May 2003, the 230-foot Comoros Island-registered freighter *Baltic Sky* loaded its cargo in Tunisia and set off on what should have been a four-day voyage to discharge in the Sudan. Instead, the vessel meandered through the Mediterranean for more than six weeks before it unexpectedly made port in the small Greek city of Astakos. Tipped off by Tunisian authorities, Greek authorities boarded the ship to discover it contained an undeclared cargo of more than 680 metric tons of ammonium nitrate explosive mixture as well as over 8,000 detonators. This was a vast amount, considering the devastation that only 1.8 metric tons of a similar explosive caused in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Was this a thwarted terrorist attack or did the vessel's owner simply delay cargo delivery while negotiating a better contract? Either way, this serves as an excellent example of the need for clearer Maritime Domain Awareness.

Vulnerable Trade Routes

An open and efficient maritime trading system is an inherent part of a globalized society. Yet, with more than 95 percent of all imports and exports to the United States traveling via maritime routes, such trade also poses an inherently open threat.

Recognizing this, in December of 2004, President Bush signed National Security Presidential Directive 41 / Homeland Security Presidential Directive

13 (NSPD-41/HSPD-13), a joint product of the White House's National Security and Homeland Security councils. The directive set a goal of protecting United States' maritime interests through the comprehensive effort of federal, state, local, and private partners. The directive went on to task both the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security with creating a "National Strategy for Maritime Security," or NSMS, a national-level strategic document, covering all the federal instruments of power.

Acting on this directive, in January 2005 a core team began to develop the NSMS while eight supporting

Maritime Domain Awareness Overview



The French tanker *Limburg* at anchor following a terrorist bombing off the coast of Yemen in October of 2002. USCG photo by CDR Chris Oelschlegel.

teams developed individual implementation plans. Membership on these teams was diverse, in order to bring together a solid interagency capability and perspective. From these teams, the NSMS was developed on three guiding principles:

- first, that the historic right to freedom of the seas must be preserved in order to maintain national security;
- second, that increased security should always concurrently seek to facilitate and defend the flow of global commerce, both before and after an incident affecting the maritime transportation system; and
- finally, that civil liberties and civil rights must be preserved under any security regime to ensure that, while the movement of dangerous goods and people must be defended against, individuals are not subjected to unreasonable or illegal screening.

These principles remain at the core of all subsequent work based on the NSMS. To reach these goals, the NSMS seeks first to prevent terrorist attacks and crim-



A Customs and Border Protection agent clears cruise ship crewmembers embarked onboard the *C/S Miracle*. Photo courtesy of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

inal acts within the maritime spectrum. Simultaneously, it seeks to protect maritime-related population centers and elements of the nation's critical infrastructure from both man-made and natural catastrophes. And finally, if these objectives fail, the third ele-

ment is to minimize damage and expedite subsequent recovery after an incident.

To accomplish these goals and objectives, the "National Strategy for Maritime Security" directed five strategic actions:

- that all elements of national power seek to enhance international cooperation against maritime threats to maximize an effective and efficient effort;
- that domain awareness (knowledge of the external environment) be maximized;
- that security efforts be embedded into the daily routine of commercial practices;
- that a layered security regime be deployed through the unification of both the public and private sector efforts; and
- that the continuity of the marine transportation system be assured in order to maintain vital global commerce.

Specifically, NSPD-41/HSPD-13 set up an interagency maritime security policy coordinating committee as the primary vehicle for facilitating interagency coordination for securing the maritime transportation system. The committee is charged with reviewing existing interagency practices and recommending improvements that better allow policies and strategies to support maritime security.

Implementation Plans

The final products of these interagency efforts were implementation plans completed in May 2005, the majority of which are available to the general public from the DHS homepage at www.dhs.gov. These implementation plans include:

- the "National Plan to Achieve Maritime Domain Awareness," which seeks to identify elements that affect the maritime domain



U.S. Northern Command personnel provide continuous monitoring of homeland defense events from its joint operations center in Colorado. Photo courtesy of U.S. Northern Command.

early and as far away as possible through a shared knowledge of events and the environment (a common operating picture);

- the “Maritime Transportation System Security Plan” that recognizes that our modern global maritime transportation system is a system of systems, composed of networks of shared and interconnected maritime and shoreside capabilities, and seeks to implement a layered, shared security net to protect that system;
- the “Maritime Commerce Security Plan” that builds on international partnerships between trade partners to embed security into everyday business practices so as to better protect the maritime supply chain;
- the “Maritime Infrastructure Recovery Plan” that recommends procedures and standards for the recovery of maritime infrastructure following a natural or man-made disruption;
- the “Global Maritime Intelligence Integration Plan,” which seeks to integrate all available intelligence regarding potential threats to U.S. maritime interests globally through the integration of existing intelligence capabilities;
- the “Maritime Operational Threat Response Plan,” which defines roles and responsibilities

ties to facilitate the coordination of operational response to threats against the United States and its interests in the global maritime domain; and

- the “International and Domestic Outreach Plans,” which guide Homeland Security and State Department efforts to engage the maritime communities in security efforts.

As their titles convey, these implementation plans cover a wide spectrum of subjects and detail how partners will achieve their common goals. Most importantly, each implementation plan is mutually linked and supportive.

As such incidents as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have shown, it will continue to be imperative for all maritime transportation partners, whether private, local, state, or federal to work together cooperatively toward our common goals. The NSMS lays out a foundation for such cooperation to better facilitate the protection of our global maritime domain.

About the Author:

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A 25-foot Coast Guard boat patrols the New York Harbor with a New York Police Department Harbor Unit boat. The Coast Guard's new 25-foot "Defender Class" boats can be equipped with heavier armament and can be transported by trailering on highways or by air in C-130 aircraft. USCG photo by PA3 Mike Hvozda.

